Democratic party, in whose councils such men as Vallandig-
ham and Fernando Wood wielded much—perhaps decisive—
influence, the probability was that either the dissolution of the
Union would be acquiesced in> or the Union would be patched
up again by means of a compromise involving the preservation
of slavery.

In the troubled contemplation of this appalling possibility,
it occurred to me that I might perhaps render better service by
entering the political campaign as a speaker, than by superin-
tending the training of new troops in my camp near Nashville,
for the uncertain contingency of their ever firing a cartridge.
I received various letters suggesting the same thing, among
them a very urgent one from Mr. Elihu B. Washburne, a
prominent member of Congress from Illinois, and another
from Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, who painted to me
in strong colors the dangers of the situation, and insisted that I
must " go on the stump," as I had done in the campaign of
1860. Finally I concluded that I ought to do so. I wrote to
Mr. Lincoln, informing him of my purpose. In his reply he
observed that if I did so, it would be at the risk of my active
employment in the army. I was willing to take the risk uncon-
ditionally, and asked, through the regular military channels,
to be relieved of my present duties. This relief was granted,
and I promptly gave up my command of the camp and jour-
neyed to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where my

family were at that time, and asked for permission to visit Washington— military officers being at that time forbidden to visit Washington without special permission from the War Department. I wished to confer with Mr, Lincoln on the political situation, and more particularly to get Ms view of the exigencies of the campaign. The official permit for a visit to Washington arrived promptly.